

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST



OCTOBER 1991 #172

THE CAPE BROOM PULL

The Broom Pull held early in September in the Botanic gardens was a great success. The flax-leaf broom and cape broom was pulled from an substantial portion of the western section of the Castlemaine Botanic gardens.

This western side of the gardens is significant in that it is home for one of the three known colonies of Eltham Copper Butterfly. The butterfly lives in association with the shrubby form of Sweet Bursaria and a particular species of ant.

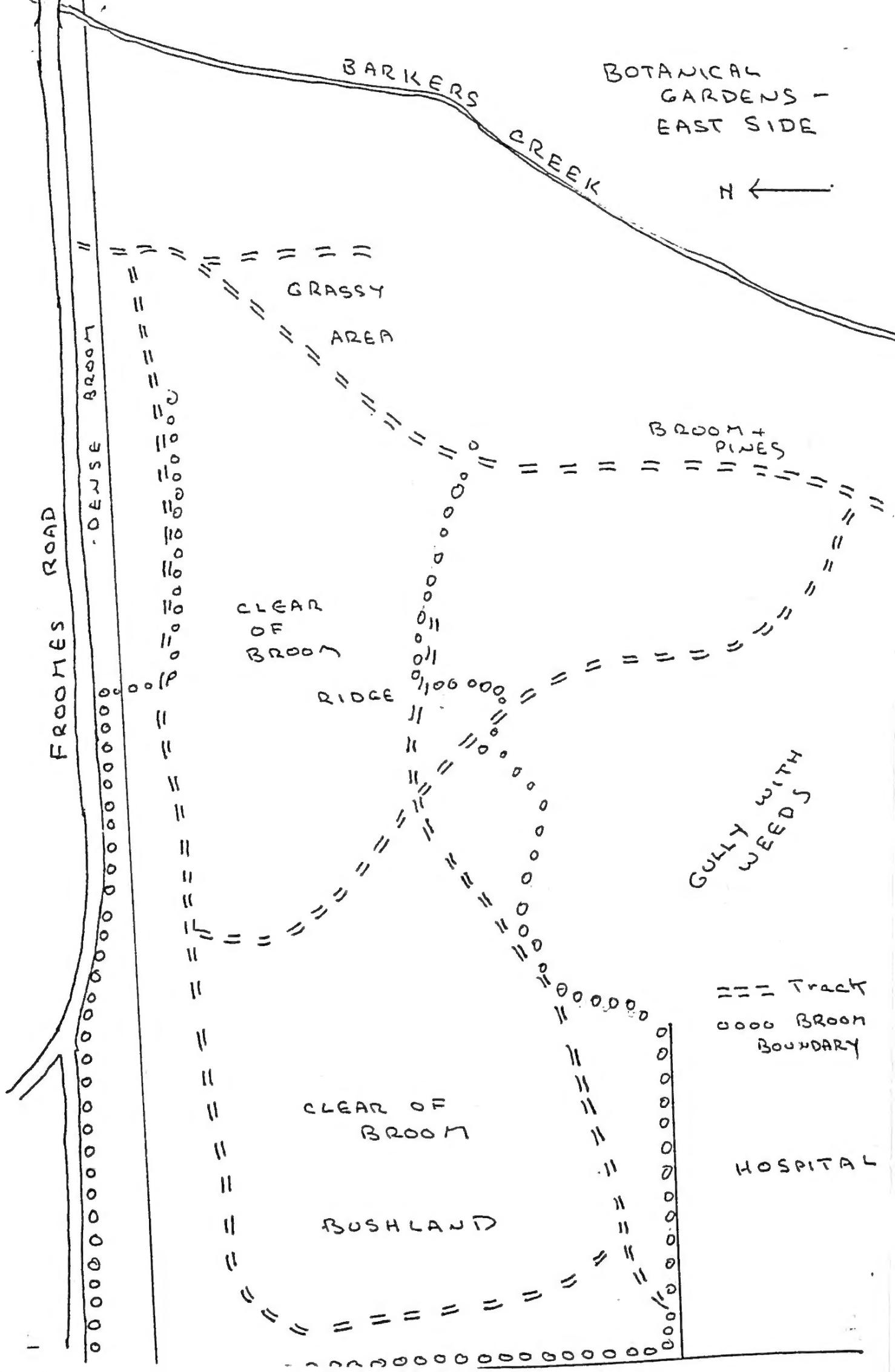
The Club has written to the Castlemaine City Council and to the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers expressing our satisfaction with the project.

All of the main bushland area has been cleared, and a substantial part of the eastern slope. This latter area is important in that it contains bursaria and so has potential to add to the area occupied by the butterflies. It is also important in that it has a wide range of native grasses. The sketch map shows the areas now clear of broom.

Substantial areas of broom remain. These are mainly along the lower portion of Froomes road (where mechanical slashing might be appropriate), in the gully to the south-east (where it is mixed with gorse and blackberry), and the southern part of the ridge (under pines).

It will be necessary to have a number of follow up sessions to pull up the seedlings. The Field Naturalist's Club has been able to keep previously weeded areas clear, and will need to keep a close watch on regeneration. We will need to pull out any new plants before they set seed. It may be necessary to arrange a special program to remove them.

We will also attempt to propagate some bursaria of the same genetic type as in the butterfly area of the gardens. These would be planted in some of the areas that have been weeded. The aim will be to increase the area occupied by the butterflies as well as their total numbers.



Fryerstown Notes

some time ago we put up several nesting boxes to encourage birds and animals to nest nearby. One box already contained a pair of ringtail possums (emigrants from Melbourne) who still live in the box. Some brushtails, received at the same time, did not stay long, however.

One fine nesting box in a grey box near the house was looked over alternately by wood duck and eastern rosellas, with some renovations after each visit to suit the most recent bird. Eventually it was settled by a wood duck. The pair used to spend a good deal of time on our dam and feeding in the nearby paddock. Now the male spends the morning on the bank, and then disappears. We don't see the female, but she can occasionally be heard in the box. Presumably she feeds at night now.

A major impetus to put up the boxes in the first place was fierce competition between eastern rosellas and crimson rosellas for a hollow stump. So far this year several pairs of crimson rosellas have nested in the boxes and left the easterns in the stump pretty much alone.

Getting the boxes high enough up the trees has been difficult. We borrowed the local fire truck with its extension ladder to put some up. Inspiration was received from Barry Golding, who gave a very informative talk to the self-sufficiency group some time ago.

We are eagerly awaiting the arrival of a clutch of ducklings, and hope our neighbours' cat does not come this way for a while. We are contemplating making a floating island for our dam.

Clodagh Norwood

P.S. Today (Thurs 26/9) I saw the male eastern rosella feeding the female by regurgitating food. He called her out of the stump, they flew to a nearby tree where he fed her, and then she returned to the stump. The whole process only took a few minutes.

C.N.

WVFNCA Campout at Lake Hattah

Friday to Sunday, Aug 30, 31. Sept 1

Five members of the CFNC attended, Frank and Edna Duffin, Maggie Oliver, Eve Gray, and George Broadway. The weather on Thursday 29 was less than propitious, with cold winds and rain as the van was being loaded with the camping gear. Friday morn did not look especially bright either, however there was still the comforting thought that better weather might be expected to the north. Still, the cold winds and rain and hail persisted and I hoped fervently that the camping ground at Lake Hattah would be sheltered from the freezing wind.

As there was no indication of the designated camping area when I arrived I opted for a pleasant site between Lake Hattah and Lake Little Hattah equipped with a picnic table and fire-place, where I was shortly joined by Maggie and Eve whom I had passed along the road near Inglewood where they had stopped for coffee. It turned out that the correct area was at the other end of the campground so we had an uncrowded weekend without noisy neighbours, except, that is, for the Noisy Miners and Apostle Birds: I had not seen Apostle Birds at such short range before, but here they came to inspect our camp for any pickings, chattering and scolding as they did so. It seems that they are quite recent arrivals at Hattah and campers were able to watch as they refurbished a nest in the campsite. They are mudnesters like the Choughs, and their technique is to take a leaf, wet it and themselves in the lake, then to turn themselves around in the nest while polishing the interior.

There is now a large information centre at Hattah of mudbrick construction and equipped with a potbelly stove and wooden benches. On the Friday and Saturday evenings we all repaired thence where we sat in warmed comfort while we were entertained by speakers who showed slides and a video. On Friday Ted Lawton of the Sunraysia club gave a most authoritative talk on conservation of the Mallee, dealing with problems created by settlement, eradication of rabbits and salination, all illustrated with his excellent slides. He was followed by Russ Palmer, son of Max and Wyn of Barkers Creek, who showed us some of his magnificent bird slides. Maggie, Eve and I were inspired to accompany Russ the next day when he led an expedition to an area where he recently saw the Mallee Emu Wren. Unfortunately the said wren did not put in an appearance on this occasion, it seems that it does not like wind (who does?) and there was still quite a bit of breeze on the Saturday although the rain had gone and the sky was mostly blue. However we were delighted to be greeted by the Striated Grass Wren which performed for us just as we commenced our walk. Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters were very busy in the area and Crested Bell-bird and Pallid Cuckoo were heard calling. Much to our delight a pair of Chestnut Quail-thrush were encountered and stayed about to give everyone a very good view. An unexpected finding was a watering system all set up to water a crop of something way out in the mallee scrub some distance from the nearest track.

After Saturday lunch we set out to investigate the two nature trails at Hattah, one a walking track, the other longer track is mostly done by car although it is possible to walk. There was little bird activity that afternoon it seemed although there were some water birds along the waterways. On Saturday evening the business meeting at 6.30 was followed by a talk and video on the subject of Mallee parks. Once again it was so warm and cosy near the stove that it was a something of a shock to find that the night was clear and frosty. Sunday morning was cloudless and windless, just perfect. Maggie and Eve joined the expedition to Red Ochre Lake while I opted to join the Ranger on an inspection of a burnt mallee area. The area had been burnt nearly two

years ago and there was much regeneration of mallees and other shrubs to be seen. In particular the Wheelfruit (*Gyrostemon australasicus*) had obviously been stimulated by the fire as bushes of it were very plentiful. The mallees too were all growing vigorously from the rootstocks, leaving the dead stalks standing. For this reason it is extremely difficult to tell the age of a mallee as it may have sprouted many times during its life after surviving fire. One again the birds seemed very scarce in this area, but I was fortunate enough to spot a pair of Mulga Parrots which came and perched in a nearby tree.

The camp concluded at lunch-time on the Sunday so Maggie, Eve and I decided to visit Lakes Mournpall and Lockie. To get to the latter involved a walk across mudflats in warm sunshine amid a mixture of very youthful and extremely ancient Red gums. Chalka Creek flows out of lake Lockie and into Lake Hattah, then on into Lakes Bulla and Arawatta. Last week all of these were full and the creek had stopped flowing, in fact, near the outlet from Lake Lockie it was quite dry.

On Sunday evening the Duffins joined us at our campsite and a pleasant evening was spent sitting around the campfire. On our return from Lake Mournpall Frank greeted us with the news that he'd been watching some interesting birds near the camp. We set out to see if we could find them and fortunately they were still in the area; they turned out to be Blue-faced Honeyeaters, quite a striking looking bird.

On my way out next morning I met Joan Phillips of the Sunraysia club who had just completed her regular bird count in the area near the park entrance. After seeing her list compiled in 20 minutes I had to check the area for myself, but my list fell somewhat short of hers. However I was rewarded with my best sighting of a Splendid Wren which came and perched on a dead tree and did not fly away when I approached but allowed me to circle around in order to view him from the sunny side so the full effect of his brilliant plumage could be appreciated. Later as I headed south past Lake Tyrell between Nandaly and Sea Lake I decided to explore a side track hoping it might lead me to the lake as I hoped that I might see Orange Chats which have been reported from there. Happily I found a track which followed the edge of the lake around and was able to see the ripping of rabbit warrens which is one of the most important control measures in the mallee country. There were no Orange Chats, but there were plenty of White-fronted ones, also Black-faced Woodswallows, a Bronze-Cuckoo and as I swung the Binocs around a flash of brilliant blue which turned out to belong to a Whie-winged Wren which was another first for me.

So we all agreed that it had been a very pleasant and successful weekend, and that the host club, the Sunraysia Field Nats were to be congratulated on their organisation which helped to make it possible. For me it was pleasant to renew friendships with members of my former clubs, Warnambool and Sunraysia, and satisfying to add four new birds to my list.

George Broadway.

BIRD LIST

Emu	Pelican	Hoary-headed Grebe
Pied Cormorant	White-necked Heron	Black Cormorant
White-faced Heron	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Intermediate Egret
Black Duck	Wood Duck	Grey Teal
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Nankeen Kestrel	Little Eagle
Mallee fowl (not by me)	Masked Plover	Dusky Moorhen
Black-fronted Dotterel	Galah	Crested Pigeon
Sulfur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow Rosella	Regent Parrot
Mallee Ringneck Parrot	Mulga parrot	Red-rumped parrot
Pallid Cuckoo	Rufous-tail Bronze Cuckoo	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Boobook Owl (H)	Kookaburra	Tawny Frogmouth (H)
Welcome Swallow	Black-face Cuckoo Shrike	Richards Pipit
Red-capped Robin	Crested Bellbird	Grey Shrike Thrush (H)
Jacky Winter	Chestnut Quailthrush	Willie Wagtail
Splendid Wren	Striated Grasswren	White-winged Wren (L Tyrrell)
Weebill	Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Yellowrump Thornbill
Blue-faced Honey-E.	Yellow-plumed H.E.	Noisy Miner
White-plumed H.E.	White-fronted Chat	Orange Chat
Yellow-rumped Pardalote	Chough	Striated Pardelote
Apostlebird	Black-faced Woodswallow	Magpie Lark
Grey Butcherbird	Australian Raven	Magpie

AUGUST AT SANDON

Birds seen drinking at the
bird bath were

Wrens

Grey shrike-thrush

Thornbills - brown, buff-
rumped, striated

White-throated treecreeper
Robin - scarlet (pair) and
Eastern yellow (pair)

Birds seen on the property

Honeyeaters - white-eared,
yellow-faced, brown-
headed, with white-naped
taking over from yellow-
tufted as the most abun-
dant variety. flying overhead)

Magpies

Grey currawongs (pair)

Rosellas - eastern & crim-
son

Masked lapwing

Sulphur-crested cockatoos

Galahs

White-winged choughs

Red wattle birds

Laughing kookaburras

Restless flycatcher

Willy wagtail

Grey fantail

Crested shrike-tit

Golden whistler

Hooded robin (pair)

Silveryeyes

Red-browed firetail

Yellow-rumped thornbills

Varied sittellas

Spotted pardalote

Speckled warbler

Australian shelduck (pair)

Maned duck

Wedge-tailed eagle (pair)

Little eagle (pair)

Southern boobook (heard)

Olive-backed oriole (heard)

S Starr.

FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING

STELLA BEDGOOD MEMORIAL LECTURE will be presented on Friday 1st November 1991 at 8.00 pm in St Cuthbert's Hall, Elliot St Ballarat. The speaker will be Mr Peter Menkhorst of Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research. He will speak on "Management of Endangered Bird Species". Club members are invited.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARYBOROUGH F.N.C. on its recent Ruby Anniversary.

KINGSTON TOURS with Western Vic F.N.C. Assoc. are conducting a 7 day tour of Kangaroo Island, from 19 October. Contact E. Perkins for information.

1992 CAMPOUT of the Vic Field Nat Club's Association will be hosted by the F.N.C. of Victoria. Excursions to Dandenongs, MMBW Farm at Werribee, the Herbarium, the Botanic Gardens etc. Labour Day weekend in 1992, held at The Basin Youth and Convention Centre.

NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

VAUGHAN DAM has been home to hardheads and Little Pied Cormorants. (CN)

BLACK TAILED NATIVE HEN has been seen at Chewton (in August) (BM)

BROLGA was seen along Boundary Road, west of Cairn Curran on Sept 8th. (EP)

TERNS were seen on Cairn Curran early in September. They were probably Whiskered terns. (KT)

PALID CUCKOO was heard on 23-24 Aug at Castlemaine North and Fan-tailed cuckoo on 1-2nd September. (RM)

LITTLE RAVENS have been nesting at Castlemaine Morth, and attempting to take galah eggs. (RM)

ROSE ROBIN ON MT ALEXANDER

On 21st August 1991 I was looking for birds in the area of the old Koala Park on Mt Alexander. It was cold and windy and the birds were hard to come by. At the eastern edge of the pine plantation I saw a female robin which I couldn't immediately identify. It was clearly a robin but not either a scarlet or flame robin, its "jizz" verging on that of a flycatcher. I looked hard for the male, without success.

I gave up and walked about 200 m. to the south and was delighted to see a male rose robin. Despite the attempts of my young kelpie to scare it away, I had excellent views of it for 10 minutes or more. I couldn't find a female in the vicinity of the male, so I'm not sure whether there were two pairs or not. I guess the birds will have moved on to their breeding environment by now.

Nigel Harland.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Sun 6 Oct. MUCKLEFORD FOREST with Ballarat F.N.C. Meet SEC, Mostyn St at 10.00 am sharp or Green Gully at 10.15 am. Lunch at Red, White and Blue Mine.

Fri 11 Oct. NOCTURNAL with Rob Watkins. High School at 8.00 pm.

Sat 12 Oct. LAURISTON WILDFLOWERS via Glenluce. S.E.C., Mostyn St at 1.30 pm sharp.

Sun 20 Oct. MALDON STEAM TRAIN WILDFLOWER TRIP. Organised by Bendigo Native Plant Group. 1 pm at Maldon RS. Later trains at 2,3 and 4 p.m. so choice of several for return. Cost \$4 adults, \$2 children. Buy tickets from BNPG on the day.

Tues 22 Oct. ELTHAM COPPER BUTTERFLY EXCURSION. Search for the grubs. Cr Mary St and Froomes Road at 7.30 pm. Bring stout shoes and a torch.

Sat 2 Nov. KALIMNA WALK. 9.30 a.m. as part of garden festival. There is a charge for non CFNC members.

Fri 8 Nov. BONY-BIG FELLA BIRDO - an examination to references in birds in the Arthur Upfield novels about the Aboriginal detective, Napolean Bonaparte. Talk by Pat Bingham. High School at 8.00 pm.

Sat 9 Nov. TIPPERARY SPRINGS. Walk from the springs to Twin Bridges. Leader R. Mills. 1.30 pm at SEC, Mostyn Street. Leader R. Mills.

Fri 13 Dec. MEMBERS & VISITORS NIGHT. Program provided by members. Bring a plate.

THE BASIN CAMPOUT. Labour Day weekend, 1992, hosted by Field nat Club of Victoria. Held at The Basin Youth and Convention Centre.

SUPPER: Oct 11: K Turner & L Perkins Nov 8: K Meehan & B Envall Dec: E Dudffin & B Maund

MEETINGS: Second Friday of each month (Jan excepted) at Castlemaine High School at 8.00 p.m. Business meetings on the fourth Thursday at 38 Campbell St at 7.30 p.m. All members are invited to attend. Visitors are invited to attend the Club's sessions.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc
P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine 3450.